

1      **CLAIMS**

- 2      1. A method for seeking access to a first server, the method comprising:
- 3                determining that a client seeking access to the first server is not  
4                authenticated by an authentication server;
- 5                communicating a request for login information to be returned to the  
6                authentication server from the client;
- 7                receiving the login information at the authentication server from the client;
- 8                authenticating the client by comparing the login information with  
9                authentication information maintained by the authentication server; and
- 10                when the login information matches the authentication information,  
11                generating a user authentication indicator at the authentication server and sending  
12                the user authentication indicator to the first server.
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- 14      2. The method of claim 1 wherein the user authentication indicator does not  
15                contain reference to the login information.
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- 17      3. The method of claim 1 wherein the user authentication indicator includes a  
18                time stamp indicating the last time the client's login information was refreshed.
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- 20      4. The method of claim 1 wherein the user authentication indicator includes a  
21                time stamp indicating the last time the client sent login information.
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- 23      5. One or more computer-readable memories containing a computer program  
24                that is executable by a processor to perform the method recited in claim 1.
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1       6. The method of claim 1, wherein the login information is used to authenticate  
2       the client with respect to the authentication server but does not have to be  
3       transmitted to the first server to authenticate the client with respect to the first  
4       server.

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6       7. A method of authenticating a client with respect to a network server to  
7       which the client is seeking access, the method comprising:

8             receiving a request at an authentication server from the network server to  
9       authenticate a client;

10           determining that the client is not authenticated by the authentication server;

11           receiving login information at the authentication server from the client;

12           authenticating the client at the authentication server by comparing the  
13       received login information with authentication information maintained by the  
14       authentication server; and

15           determining that the received login information matches the authentication  
16       information, whereupon an authentication indication is generated at the  
17       authentication server and communicated to the network server.

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19       8. The method of claim 7 wherein the authentication indication further  
20       includes:

21           a first time stamp indicating the last time the client's login information was  
22       refreshed; and

23           a second time stamp indicating the last time the client sent login  
24       information.

1       9. The method of claim 7 wherein the network server includes a web server  
2 coupled to the Internet.

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4       10. The method of claim 7 wherein the received login information includes a  
5 login ID and a password.

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7       11. The method of claim 7 further comprising concealing the received login  
8 information from the network server.

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10      12. The method of claim 7 further comprising concealing the authentication  
11 information from the network server.

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13      13. The method of claim 7 wherein the client has registered with the  
14 authentication server prior to receiving the request.

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16      14. The method of claim 7 wherein the network server has registered with the  
17 authentication server prior to receiving the request.

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19      15. The method of claim 7, wherein the login information is used to  
20 authenticate the client with respect to the authentication server but does not have  
21 to be transmitted to the first server to authenticate the client with respect to the  
22 network server.

1       16. The method of claim 7, wherein the authentication indication acts as a  
2 client authentication indicator.

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4       17. One or more computer-readable media having stored thereon a plurality of  
5 instructions that when executed by a processor, cause the processor to perform the  
6 following steps:

7             receiving a request to authenticate a user seeking access to a network  
8 server;

9             determining that the user is not authenticated by an authentication server;

10            receiving login information at the authentication server from the user;

11            authenticating the user at the authentication server by comparing the  
12 received login information with authentication information maintained by the  
13 authentication server;

14            when the received login information matches the authentication  
15 information, generating a user authentication indicator at the authentication server  
16 and sending the user authentication indicator to the network server.

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18       18. The computer-readable media of claim 17 wherein the received login  
19 information includes a login ID and a password.

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21       19. The computer-readable media of claim 17, wherein the login information is  
22 used to authenticate the client with respect to the authentication server but does  
23 not have to be transmitted to the first server to authenticate the client with respect  
24 to the network server.

1       **20.** A system comprising:

2              a network server to receive a request by the client to gain access to the  
3              network server,

4                      the network server to transmit a request to the authentication server  
5              for the authentication server to authenticate the client, the request includes  
6              the client's login information;

7              an authentication server to determine that the client is authenticated with  
8              respect to the authentication server,

9                      the authentication server to transmit a user authentication indicator  
10             to the network server, the client authentication indicator to indicate whether  
11             the client is authenticated; and

12              whereby the network server is to grant access to the client at the network  
13             server when the client authentication indicator determines that the client is  
14             authenticated at the authentication server.

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16       **21.** The system of claim 20 wherein the network server is to deny access to the  
17             client if the user authentication indicator indicates that the client is not  
18             authenticated.

1      **22.** The system of claim 20 wherein the user authentication indicator includes a  
2 first time stamp indicating the last time the client's login information was  
3 refreshed.

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5      **23.** The system of claim 20 wherein the user authentication indicator includes a  
6 second time stamp indicating the last time the client physically entered their login  
7 information.

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